## *[Counter Propaganda Report] Fact Check: Did Russia Admit to the USA landing on the Moon?*

***Fact-checking includes:*** *'does Russia believe in conspiracies?', and 'If Russia thought the U.S. didn't land on the moon, why didn't they say anything?'*

# The 'Russian Admission' Narrative

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DATE: 09/08/2025
LOCATION: Online media (U.S./international)
PROPAGANDA OUTLET: Newsweek (*USA*), The Economic Times (*India*), Ynet (*Israel*)

## 1. Executive Summary

- Several outlets ran headlines implying: ***"Russia finally admits the U.S. landed on the Moon."***
- This framing overstates what was said and blurs an old, well-documented *sample exchange* into a new "confession," shaping public sentiment via triumphalism rather than facts. (Newsweek, The Economic Times, Ynet)
- **Counter-finding:** Roscosmos chief Yury Borisov stated that Russian scientists verified a U.S.-provided lunar soil sample as genuine; he did **not** make a blanket admission about crewed Apollo landings. (Interfax)

## 2. Context & Background

- **Trigger:** Borisov's remarks to the State Duma on **3 July 2024** about a U.S. lunar soil sample the USSR received decades ago. (Interfax)
- **Similar narratives:** Periodic "finally admits/puts to rest" headlines resurface around Apollo topics.
- **Likely audiences:** General news readers; space-interest communities; people who skim headlines; partisans seeking confirmation.

## 3. Source Information

- **Encountered on:** News aggregation and mainstream outlets (e.g., *Newsweek*, *Economic Times*, *Ynet*).
- **Primary origin:** Interfax (*Russia*) reporting Borisov's Duma comment.
- **Origin:** These outlets are not connected through ownership, their country of origins are: Newsweek (*USA*), The Economic Times (*India*), Ynet (*Israel*)

## 4. Propaganda Narrative

- **Main claim:** "Russia has now *admitted* the U.S. really landed on the Moon."
- **Slogans/keywords:** "finally admits," "puts to rest," "***conspiracy debunked***."

## 5. Evidence Log

- **Primary quote:** "An examination by our Academy of Sciences confirmed that it is exactly lunar soil," Borisov told the State Duma (03 Jul 2024). (Interfax)
- **Headline example:** *Newsweek*: "Russian space chiefs finally admit…", *Economic Times*: "Finally… puts conspiracy to rest."
- **Background fact:** U.S.-USSR **1971** formal exchange of Apollo and Luna samples (6 g [us] for 3 g [ru]). (NASA, Wikimedia Commons)

## 6. Analysis & Techniques

- **Why it's propaganda:** It reframes a statement about *sample authenticity* into a sweeping "admission," exploiting headline-skimming behavior.
- **Techniques used:** Headline exaggeration, Conflation of sample authenticity with crewed landing confirmation, Appeal to authority.
- **Contradictions:** The USSR already had U.S. samples via a 1971 exchange. Soil and retroreflectors can be (and were) delivered robotically.

## 7. Counter-Narrative

- **Key facts:** U.S.-USSR exchanged samples in **1971**. USSR's **Luna 16** (Sept 1970) robotically returned lunar soil. Soviet **Lunokhod 1 & 2** rovers robotically deployed retroreflectors.
- **Public opinion in Russia (2018 to 2020):** In a nationally representative VCIOM poll, **57% of Russians in 2018** agreed with the statement "There was no moon landing… the U.S. government faked it in 1969."
- **Media shorthand vs. the actual quote:** On **July 3, 2024**, Roscosmos director **Yury Borisov** told the State Duma that Russian scientists confirmed a U.S.-provided **lunar soil sample** is genuine; this **does not** equal a blanket admission about *crewed* Apollo landings; it's a statement about **sample authenticity**.
- **Accurate version:** Borisov referenced a U.S.-provided lunar sample that Russian scientists verified as genuine. No comprehensive statement about Apollo crew activities was made.
- **Russian Rhetoric:** In **May 2023**, former Roscosmos chief **Dmitry Rogozin** publicly cast doubt on the U.S. landings.
- **Robot vs. human capabilities (why sample ≠ crew):** The USSR returned lunar soil **robotically** (Luna-16, Sept 1970) and deployed **retroreflectors** via Lunokhod rovers, so confirming lunar soil or having reflectors on the Moon **doesn't by itself** prove a human presence.

## 8. Annex

A. Mini-Timeline

- **1969-72:** Apollo landings; Apollo 11 places first lunar retroreflector.
- **Sept 1970:** USSR's **Luna 16** returns robotic lunar samples (101 g).
- **10 Jun 1971:** Formal U.S.–USSR lunar sample exchange ceremony (6 g [us] for 3 g [ru]).
- **03 Jul 2024:** Borisov tells Duma Russian Academy confirmed U.S. sample is lunar.
- **04-09 Jul 2024:** Headlines spin this as "Russia finally admits."

B. Notes

- Retroreflectors and soil returns are achievable without humans present; their existence alone is not dispositive of crewed activity.

## 9. Conspiracy Claims

- In Russia, surveys in 2020 showed that **94%** accepted the Earth as a sphere while **4%** did not know, and **2%** believed it was flat, whereas in the U.S. where **86%** affirm Earth's roundness, and **4.3%** affirm it is flat, and **5.6%** said it was "somewhat likely to be true." (wciom, InsiderNJ)
- When it comes to the *Moon landings*, Russia stands apart, with **49%** saying the *1969 Apollo mission* was faked, **31%** believing it was real, and **20%** unsure, compared to the U.S. where only about **18%** in 2023 polls say the landing was staged and strong majorities affirm it happened. (wciom, InsiderNJ, YouGov)
- And on *vaccines*, **84%** of Russians in ***2020*** said vaccines are effective, safe or neutral, and **9%** say they were harmful, while in the U.S. about **71%** of Americans believe vaccines that are approved for use in the U.S. are safe in ***2020***; and about **69%** of adults in 2021 said the benefits of childhood vaccines outweigh risks, down from **94%** in 2001. (KFF, Annenberg)

## 10. Why Doesn't Russia Say Anything?

*In short, they have. Here is some recent coverage.*

- **TV Center (ТВЦ) - "Postscriptum" (April–May 2017)** Two prime-time episodes of this program, hosted by Alexey Pushkov, advanced arguments for the "lunar hoax" theory. The broadcasts prompted public rebuttals from figures associated with the Russian Academy of Sciences. *(Sources: Vokrug TV, Kommersant)*
- **REN TV - "Unknown History: The Lunar Conspiracy" (September 14, 2019)** An hour-long newsmagazine segment, framed as an "investigation," packaged classic Apollo-skeptic claims for a mass audience. The network revisited the theme in subsequent programming in 2021. *(Sources: REN TV, Vokrug TV)*
- **REN TV - "The Most Shocking Hypotheses: The Lunar Conspiracy" (November 11, 2020)** In line with the network's broader focus on conspiratorial topics, this popular prime-time docu-tainment show explored the possibility that Americans never landed on the Moon. *(Source: Vokrug TV)*
- **"Anti-Apollo: The USA's Lunar Scam" by Yuri Mukhin (2005)** This widely circulated book asserts that the Apollo missions were staged and filmed in a studio. *(Source: epizodyspace.ru)*
- **"A Man on the Moon? What is the Evidence?" by Alexander I. Popov (2006/2009)** This pamphlet argues that physical evidence on the Moon, such as retroreflectors, does not prove a human presence and could have been delivered by robotic means. *(Source: epizodsspace.airbase.ru)*
- **Regional and National Press Coverage (2017-2022)** Various Russian media outlets published articles of skepticism, with the narrative of statistics suggesting widespread disbelief among the Russian public. *(Sources: gazetaeao.ru, kp.ru)*
- **Public Doubts from Dmitry Rogozin (May 2023)** The former chief of Roscosmos claimed on Telegram that he had "found no proof" of the Apollo landings. His statement was widely discussed on Russian and Ukrainian technology and space-focused news sites but was not covered in U.S. **mainstream** news. *(Sources: Naked Science, Universe Space Tech)*
- **VCIOM Public Opinion Polling (2018-2020)** Polling by the Russian state-owned VCIOM found that 57% of Russians in 2018 and 49% in 2020 endorsed the view that the moon landing was faked. *(Sources: WCIOM, TASS)*